

Draft Environmental Assessment

MEDICINE RIVER FISHING ACCESS SITE
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



JUNE 2015



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

**Medicine River Fishing Access Site
Proposed Development Project
Draft Environmental Assessment
MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST**

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

In 1996, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 11 acres of land in Cascade County, Montana along the Sun River for the purpose of establishing a fishing access site (FAS). FWP proposes to develop Medicine River FAS by constructing a gravel boat launch, extending the access road to the river, developing a new parking area and staging area, and installing barrier rock, fencing, and signs.

2. Agency authority for the Proposed Action:

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted Section 87-1-605, Montana Code Annotated (MCA), which authorizes the collection fees and charges for the use of fishing access sites, directs Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature earmarked a funding account to ensure that the fishing access site program would be implemented. Section 87-1-303, MCA, contains rule-making authority for their use, occupancy, and protection. Furthermore, Section 23-1-110, MCA, and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

ARM 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed action in relation to this rule. See Appendix A for HB 495 qualification.

3. Name of project:

Medicine River Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Project

4. Project sponsor:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

5. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Public Comment Period: June 2015
Estimated Decision Notice: July 2015
Estimated Commencement Date: Summer 2015
Estimated Completion Date: Summer/Fall 2015
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 35%

6. **Location:**
 Medicine River FAS is located along the Sun River in the town of Sun River, approximately 26 miles west of Great Falls, Montana on Highway 200 in Cascade County. The land is located in Section 34, Township 21 North, Range 1 West (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. General Location of Medicine River FAS.

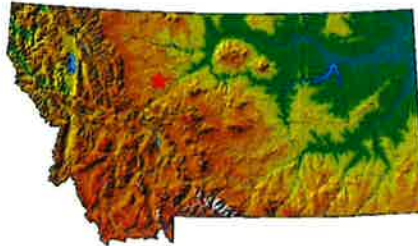


Figure 2. Highway Location of Medicine River FAS.



7. **Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected by the proposed project:**

<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>	
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>1.5</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>0</u>

Figure 3. Parcel Map of Medicine River FAS.



8. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** Permits would be filed at least 2 weeks prior to project start.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permits</u>
Cascade County	Floodplain Permit
Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality	318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)	124 Montana Stream Protection Act
US Army Corps of Engineers	404 Federal Clean Water Act

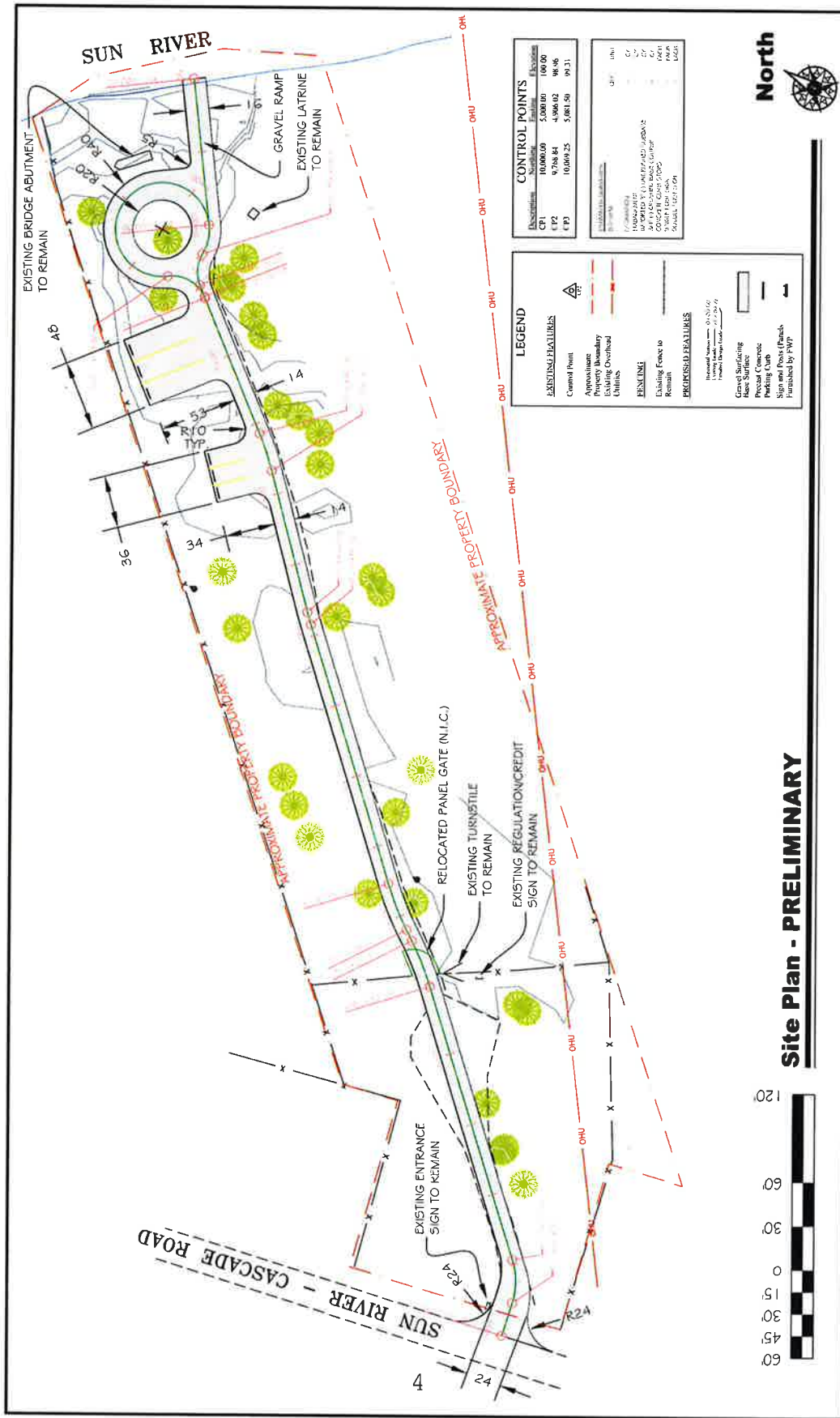
(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Site Protection Fund	\$40,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern (Appendix B)
Cascade County Weed District	Weed Management Coordination
State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural Clearance (Appendix E)

Figure 4. Medicine River FAS Proposed Development Preliminary Concept Site Plan.



9. Narrative summary of the Proposed Action:

The 130-mile long Sun River, also called the Medicine River, begins in the mountains of the Rocky Mountain Front at the confluence of the North and South Forks of the Sun River on the eastern edge of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. From its origin downstream to Gibson Dam, the river is impounded, with water elevations fluctuating greatly on a seasonal basis. Further downstream the Sun River Diversion Dam functions to divert water to the Greenfields Irrigation District and Willow Creek Reservoir, parts of the Bureau of Reclamation's Sun River Project. These dams regulate flows of the Sun River, frequently leading to low water during the summer as irrigation demands increase. Below the Diversion Dam the river flows through a scenic canyon with numerous bedrock drops, boulder gardens, and several substantial irrigation diversion drops. Once the Sun River leaves the mountains, access to the river is difficult but the views are spectacular, with the Rocky Mountain Front extending for the entire western horizon. Just below Vaughn, the gradient decreases substantially and the water frequently is extremely turbid due to sedimentation from Muddy Creek, a tributary used as an irrigation wasteway for the Greenfields Irrigation Project, and eventually meets the Missouri River near Great Falls.

Fish populations in the Sun River are below their biological potential due to chronic, seasonal dewatering from irrigation and high seasonal water temperatures. Coordinated efforts by organizations within the Sun River Watershed Group are designed to improve in-stream flows and improve fish populations. Despite this, the Sun River still offers quality fishing opportunities.

Medicine River FAS is located on the Sun River 28 miles upstream of its mouth near Great Falls. The Sun River is open to angling year-round below Gibson Reservoir and use by anglers is light due to dewatering and limited river access. According to recent surveys by FWP, the average estimated angler days per year from 2005 to 2013 on the 79-mile stretch from Muddy Creek (river mile 17) to Gibson Reservoir (river mile 96) was 6,556, with a low of 3,506 in 2007 and a high of 9,107 in 2013. The regional ranking for this stretch of river averaged the 18th most fished body of water and the state ranking averaged the 103rd most fished body of water in Montana from 2005 to 2011, out of more than 1,400 waters that were surveyed within the state. Medicine River FAS is located between Largent's Bend FAS (river mile 23) and Fort Shaw FAS (river mile 34).

Vegetation found on Medicine River FAS is classified as Great Plains Floodplain by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) and consists of lowland and prairie grasslands and riparian woodland. Common plants found on Medicine River FAS include plains cottonwood, narrow-leaf cottonwood, thin-leaf alder, Russian olive, chokecherry, peachleaf willow, sandbar willow, red-osier dogwood, Woods' rose, silverberry, white virgin's bower, wild licorice, smooth brome, orchardgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and cheatgrass. Common exotic plants include Russian olive, leafy spurge, common dandelion, kochia, smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, orchardgrass, and cheatgrass. A search by the MNHP found that no plant Species of Concern have been observed within the vicinity of the proposed project.

Common wildlife species found in the vicinity of Medicine River FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, red fox, coyote, badger, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through

the area on a seasonal basis, including Canada geese, golden eagle, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. Common game fish found in this reach of Sun River include rainbow trout, brown trout, and mountain whitefish.

A search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) found that no animal or plant species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been observed within the vicinity of Medicine River FAS. The search found that bald eagle, delisted and being monitored by the USFWS, was observed within one mile of the FAS as recently as 2011. The search indicated that other Montana Species of Concern have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project, including great blue heron, chestnut-collared longspur, and bobolink.

Only primitive parking facilities, a two-track lane to the river to facilitate launching canoes and rafts, latrine, and perimeter fencing have been provided at the 11-acre Medicine River FAS since its acquisition in 1996. FWP proposes to develop Medicine River FAS, including: 1) developing a designated day-use gravel parking area to accommodate approximately three to four truck/trailer vehicles and three to four single vehicles; 2) constructing a staging area near the boat launch to improve traffic flow and vehicle maneuvering; 3) constructing a single-wide gravel boat launch; 4) extending the access road to the river; 5) reconditioning and improving the existing access road surface to control surface erosion; 6) re-vegetating areas along the river with native riparian plants to reduce surface and streambank erosion and reduce river sedimentation; 7) installing barrier rocks to control vehicle access; 8) installing fencing; and 9) installing directional, informational, and regulatory signs. The existing latrine would remain in place.

The property would be managed under existing FWP public use regulations, including routine maintenance, control of vehicles and firearms, and other accepted FWP recreation area management policies. Medicine River FAS is open for archery hunting only during established seasons. The proposed project would improve recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, floating, picnicking, and wildlife viewing; would preserve this stretch of riparian and open-space habitat; and fill a need for recreation opportunities in the popular and scenic Sun River Valley.

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action.

If no action was taken and Medicine River FAS was not developed, with an extended access road to the river, a gravel parking and staging area, and singlewide gravel boat launch, inadequate facilities and resource degradation would continue to be an issue at the FAS. Erosion of the undeveloped road and pioneered boat launch, sedimentation of the river, and degradation of native riparian vegetation would continue. Vehicle parking and boat launching would continue to be inconvenient. Parking on unimproved areas would cause continued erosion of those surfaces and contribute to river sedimentation. FWP would continue to provide general maintenance to the site and would continue to implement the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control noxious weeds on the property.

Alternative B: Proposed Action.

FWP proposes to develop Medicine River FAS by constructing a gravel boat launch, extending the access road to the river, developing a new parking area and staging area, and installing barrier rock, fencing, and signs. The Proposed Action would help accommodate the increasing demands in the area from diverse recreational uses,

reduce resource degradation, reduce sediment runoff, and provide stream protection. FWP would continue implementing the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan to control noxious weeds on the property.

11. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

FWP would employ Best Management Practices (BMP), which are designed to reduce or eliminate sediment delivery to waterways during construction. FWP would develop the final design and specifications for the Proposed Action. All county, state and federal permits listed in Part I 8(a) above would be obtained by FWP as required. A private contractor selected through the State's contracting processes would complete the construction.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X		Yes Positive	1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		Yes Positive	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

- 1a. The Proposed Action would not affect existing soil patterns, structures, productivity, or fertility. Soil stability would be improved because vehicles would be limited to designated areas, disturbed areas would be re-vegetated, and re-vegetating with riparian vegetation would stabilize the riverbank soils. Soil and geologic substructure would remain stable during and after the proposed work.
- 1b. During construction, some minor modifications to the existing soil features would be required for the construction of the parking area, staging area, boat launch, and access road extension. Disturbed areas would be seeded with a native seed mix to minimize erosion, sediment delivery to the Sun River, and the spread of noxious weeds. The FAS is managed for recreation and wildlife habitat and is not under commercial agricultural production. The Proposed Action also would not affect soil productivity or soil fertility. FWP

Best Management Practices (BMP) would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize erosion.

- 1c. No unique geologic or physical features would be altered by the Proposed Action.
- 1d. Erosion of the unimproved parking area and access road and pioneered boat launch are causing sedimentation of the Sun River in the vicinity of the FAS and degradation of native riparian vegetation on the FAS. The construction of a boat launch, parking area, access road extension, and staging area would reduce erosion of those surfaces and reduce sedimentation of the river. Minor amounts of sediment may enter the river during construction of the boat launch, parking area, access road extension, and staging area. However, upon completion, current levels of erosion and sedimentation to the river would be reduced.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				2b.
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		NA				2e.

- 2a. Dust may be temporarily generated during construction of the parking area, boat launch, access road extension and staging area. If additional materials were needed off-site, loading at the source site would generate minor amounts of dust. FWP would follow FWP BMP during all phases of construction to minimize risks and reduce dust. See Appendix D for the BMP's. There would be a temporary increase in diesel exhaust from equipment used during construction. If the Proposed Action were implemented, odors from diesel exhaust would dissipate rapidly. These impacts would be short term and minor.
- 2b. The latrine would continue to be regularly maintained to minimize objectionable odors.
- 2e. The proposed project would have no impact on air quality in the vicinity of Medicine River FAS and would not result in any discharge which could conflict with federal or state air quality regulations.

	IMPACT
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3. WATER	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		Yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes Positive	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?			X		Yes	3d.
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		Yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		NA				3l.
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		NA				3m.

- 3a. Construction of a gravel boat launch, parking area, access road extension, and staging area may cause a temporary, localized increase in turbidity in the Sun River. FWP would obtain a Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) 318 Authorization Permit for Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity. FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction (Appendix D).
- 3b. Construction of a gravel boat launch, designated parking area, access road extension, and staging area would reduce erosion from the unimproved parking area and two-track road, erosion of the streambank and reduce sedimentation of the river. The Proposed Action would be designed to minimize any effect on surface water, surface runoff, and drainage patterns. FWP BMP would be followed (Appendix D) during construction.
- 3d. There may be a minor, temporary increase of runoff during construction. FWP BMP's would be followed (Appendix D).
- 3h. The use of heavy equipment during construction may result in a slight risk of contamination from petroleum products and a temporary increase in sediment delivery to the Sun River.

FWP BMP's would be followed during all phases of construction to minimize these risks (Appendix D).

- 3l. According to the Cascade County Floodplain Administrator, all of the proposed project site on Medicine River FAS is located within the floodway, as shown on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Map 30013C0265E, Effective Date March 19, 2013. Permits from FWP, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the US Army Corps of Engineers, and Cascade County would be obtained to insure that the proposed project would be in compliance with federal, state, and county floodplain and water quality regulations.
- 3m. All impacts to water quality would be temporary resulting from construction. Water quality of the river could improve as a result of the proposed project by reducing sedimentation into the river from surface and riverbank erosion.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		Yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		Yes Positive	4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		NA				4f.
g. Other:		NA				

- 4a. The Proposed Action would have no impact on the plant diversity or productivity of Medicine River FAS and would have a minor impact on plant abundance. Any area disturbed during construction would be reseeded with a native seed mix. Construction of a gravel boat launch, access road extension, parking area, and staging area would have minor impacts on plant communities and diversity. Even though the parking area, access road extension and staging area would be built on undeveloped land, that site has been highly disturbed with a pioneered boat launch and undeveloped two-track road and parking area for years.
- 4b. The Proposed Action would improve the riparian plant community by eliminating streambank degradation due to pioneered, hand launching of canoes and rafts and by planting riparian vegetation along the riverbank. The proposed project would have a minor impact on other plant communities found on the FAS. Vegetation found on Medicine River FAS is classified as Great Plains Floodplain by the MNHP and consists of lowland and prairie grasslands and riparian woodland. Common plants found on Medicine River FAS include plains cottonwood, narrow-leaf cottonwood, thin-leaf alder, Russian olive, chokecherry, peachleaf willow, sandbar willow, red-osier dogwood, Woods' rose, silverberry, white virgin's bower, wild

licorice, smooth brome, orchardgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and cheatgrass. Common exotic plants include Russian olive, leafy spurge, common dandelion, kochia, smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, orchardgrass, and cheatgrass.

- 4c. A search of the MNHP Montana Species of Concern database found no recorded observations of plant Species of Concern in the vicinity of Medicine River FAS.
- 4e. The most common noxious weed found on the FAS, as classified by the Montana Department of Agriculture, is leafy spurge, with small concentrations of spotted knapweed. Cheatgrass and Russian olive, classified as regulated species by the Montana Department of Agriculture, are also found on the property. Kochia, a common agricultural weed, is present around the undeveloped parking area. Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological, and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property. Weed management would include the establishment of native vegetation to prevent the spread of weeds. Vehicles would be restricted to the parking area and access road, which would be maintained as weed-free, and vehicles would not be allowed on undisturbed areas of the site to minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Weed control costs for Medicine River FAS in 2014 was under \$1,000. FWP estimates that weed control will continue to cost under \$1,000 during fiscal year 2015.
- 4f. According to a search of the Natural Resource Conservation Service Web Soil Survey on April 16, 2015, approximately 1-acre of the proposed project site is classified as Farmland of Statewide Significance and the remaining 1/2 acre is not classified as Prime Farmland. However, the site has not been under agricultural production since the property was acquired by FWP in 1996 and the FAS is surrounded by residential development. A search of the MNHP wetland-mapping program on March 16, 2015 found that the MNHP has not completed wetland mapping of the vicinity of the FAS. According to historic National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetland mapping, no wetlands are located on or near Medicine River FAS.

5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				5a.

b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b.
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				5g.
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		NA				5h.
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		NA				5i.

5a. The proposed action would have no impact on any critical fish or wildlife habitat. This stretch of the Sun River and the vicinity around the FAS is not considered critical habitat for any fish or wildlife species. The proposed improvements are designed to minimize impacts to wildlife habitat. Few trees or shrubs would be removed for construction of the boat launch, parking area, access road extension, and staging area.

5b/5c. Common wildlife species found in the vicinity of Medicine River FAS include white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, red fox, coyote, badger, beaver, northern river otter, American mink, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron, and a variety of small mammals. A wide variety of resident and migratory bird species use or travel through the area on a seasonal basis, including Canada geese, golden eagle, bald eagle, osprey, and a variety of other raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds. According to Kristina Smucker, FWP Region 4 Non-Game Wildlife Biologist and Ryan Rauscher, FWP Region 4 Wildlife Biologist, the proposed project would have no impact on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Common game fish found in this reach of Sun River include rainbow trout, brown trout, and mountain whitefish. Other fish species commonly found in this reach include longnose sucker, longnose dace, mountain sucker, white sucker, carp, and sculpin. According to Jason Mullen, FWP Region 4 Fisheries Biologist, the proposed project is not expected to have any impact on the aquatic habitat or fish species of the Sun River.

5f. A search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) found that no animal or plant species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been observed within the vicinity of the FAS. The search found that bald eagle, delisted and being monitored by the USFWS, was observed within the vicinity of the FAS as recently as 2011. The search indicated other Montana Species of Concern have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project, including great blue heron, chestnut-collared longspur, and bobolink (Appendix B).

According to Kristina Smucker, FWP Region Non-Game Wildlife Biologist, there is a bald

eagle nest over 2 miles downstream of Medicine River FAS. While bald eagles were officially delisted in 2007, the USFWS has jurisdiction protecting this species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The *Management Guidelines* of the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan recommend seasonal restrictions from February 1 through August 15 for construction and maintenance of roads and trails within direct line of sight of an active nest and visual buffers for construction activities within 1/4 mile of an active nest. Because the nest is over 1/4 mile from the construction site and is not within the direct line of sight of an active nest, the Proposed Action would not impact bald eagle nesting. In addition, any increased public use of the FAS would have no or minor impact on bald eagles as they have been accustomed to disturbance from agriculture, recreation, and residential development in the area for years. FWP would minimize the impacts from increased public use by implementing the recommendations outlined in the *Management Guidelines* of the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan, including public education, signage, boating restrictions, and monitoring by FWP biologists.

According to Kristina Smucker, there are no known great blue heron rookeries in the area so the Proposed Action would not affect great blue heron nesting. It is unlikely that the proposed project would have any impact on chestnut-collared longspur or bobolink since the FAS does not provide preferred habitat for these species.

According to Ty Smucker, FWP Wolf Management Specialist, Medicine River FAS is within the habitat of the gray wolf and is close to established wolf packs. However, wolves typically do not use the area near Medicine River FAS and, due to the proximity of the FAS to a busy highway, agricultural activity, and residential development, it is unlikely there would be any issues involving wolves. While it is possible for wolves to travel through the project area, none have been recently sighted in the immediate area of Medicine River FAS.

- 5g. The proposed project is unlikely to change existing stress levels or impact fish or wildlife populations in the future since the area is located in an area already disturbed by residences, a busy county road and state highway, nearby agricultural activity, and recreational use of the FAS and the Sun River.
- 5h. A search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) found that no animal or plant species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have been observed within the vicinity of the FAS. The search found that bald eagle, delisted and being monitored by the USFWS, was observed within the vicinity of the FAS as recently as 2011. The search indicated other Montana Species of Concern have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project, including great blue heron, chestnut-collared longspur, and bobolink (Appendix B).
- 5i. No wildlife species would be imported or exported to the area as a result of the proposed development. This project only involves the improvement of the FAS and will not promote the introduction or spread of invasive species.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		Yes	6a.

b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			X		Yes	6b.
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

- 6a. Construction equipment would cause a temporary, minor increase in noise levels at the project site. Any increase in noise level at the construction site would be short term and minor.
- 6b. Medicine River FAS is located within 1/4 mile of over 15 residences. During construction there may be a minor increase in noise levels at the site. FWP would follow the guidelines of the good neighbor policy, which would mitigate increased noise levels and would attempt to limit construction to periods of low visitation to minimize disturbance to others.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				7d.

- 7a. Because Medicine River FAS is not under agricultural production, the proposed project would have no impact on the productivity or profitability of the FAS.
- 7d. The proposed project would have no affect on the land uses of nearby private properties.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a.

b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes Positive	8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		NA				8d.

- 8a. Physical disturbance of the soil during construction and increased visitor use of the site could encourage the establishment of additional noxious weeds on the site. FWP would continue implementing an integrated approach to control noxious weeds, as outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan. The integrated plan uses a combination of biological, mechanical, and herbicidal treatments to control noxious weeds. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines to minimize the risk of chemical spills or water contamination and would be applied by Certified Pesticide Applicators.

There is a minor and temporary risk of fuel or oil from heavy equipment accidentally releasing into the river during construction. Contractors would have absorbent materials on site to minimize any hydrocarbon releases, as well as conduct startup inspection of all hydraulic lines and cylinder seals daily to reduce the potential for a release. FWP would follow Best Management Practices during all phases of construction to minimize risks (Appendix D).

- 8c. The proposed project would improve public safety by replacing the pioneered boat launch with a gravel boat launch and improving traffic flow by providing designated parking, a staging area, and access road extension, thereby minimizing vehicle conflicts.
- 8d. The use of herbicides to control noxious weeds could result in temporary water contamination from an inadvertent spill. The use of herbicides would be in compliance with application guidelines, outlined in the FWP Statewide Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan, to minimize this risk and would be applied by Certified Pesticide Applicators.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				

c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				9e.

- 9c. The Proposed Action is designed to improve recreational use of the area by providing a designated boat launch, parking area, access road extension, and staging area. This could likely benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix C - Tourism Report).
- 9d. There would be no change in commercial use of the site.
- 9e. The Proposed Action would have little or no impact on traffic on the Sun River-Cascade Road, which is the primary access route to the FAS.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources		X				10e.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f.

- 10a. The Proposed Action would have no impact on public services or utilities. The proposed improvements would require periodic maintenance by FWP and the site would continue to be patrolled by FWP Wardens.
- 10b. The Proposed Action would have no effect on the local and state tax base and revenue.
- 10e. Under the Proposed Action, Medicine River FAS would be operated for day use only. Therefore, no revenue would be generated from camping fees.

- 10f. Projected annual operating, maintenance, and personnel expense for fiscal year 2015 is estimated to total approximately \$2,500.

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		Yes Positive	11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				11b.
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)			X		Yes Positive	11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		NA				11d.

- 11a/b. The Proposed Action would not affect the aesthetic values of the FAS. The boat launch would be visible from the Sun River, the Highway 200 Bridge, and several nearby residences. Replacing the pioneered launch with a gravel boat launch and re-vegetating the eroded riverbank with native vegetation would improve the aesthetic value of the site.
- 11b. The site is already partially developed and is surrounded by residences so the proposed improvements would have no effect on the aesthetic character of the neighborhood or community.
- 11c. The Proposed Action is designed to improve recreational use of the area by constructing a gravel boat launch, developing designated parking, staging area and extended access road. This could benefit local retail and service businesses (Appendix C - Tourism Report).
- 11d. No designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails, or wilderness areas would be impacted by the proposed improvements.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				

c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		NA				12d.

12a/d. Remnants of the abandoned right-of-way for the Augusta Branch of the Great Northern Railroad, including a portion of the grade, concrete trestles, and footings, are present on the north and south parcels of Medicine River FAS. A cultural resource inventory was previously completed and the site recommended as ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). FWP concluded that there is a low likelihood of adverse impacts to cultural resources should the project proceed as proposed. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted and has concurred with FWP recommendations of NRHP ineligibility and for the project (Appendix E). If cultural materials are discovered during construction, work would cease and SHPO would be contacted for a more in-depth investigation.

12c. Medicine River FAS is located within the aboriginal range of the Blackfoot Indians, who referred to the Sun River as Medicine River. FWP named Medicine River FAS in honor of the Blackfoot Indians. The cultural resource inventory did not identify Blackfoot Indian cultural resources on the FAS. Medicine River FAS is located in an area that has been disturbed by residential, agricultural, and recreational use for years. It is unlikely that the proposed project would have any impact on the culture or cultural resources of the Blackfoot Indians.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when		X				

considered together or in total.)						
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		NA				13f.
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		NA				13g.

The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of Sun River, a popular recreational river in Montana.

- 13f. Medicine River FAS is a popular FAS. The proposed project is designed to improve recreational facilities on the site and is not expected to generate organized opposition or substantial public controversy.
- 13g. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineer 404 Federal Clean Water Act is the only federal permit required for the proposed development. The Montana DEQ 318 Short Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity and the FWP 124 Montana Stream Protection Act are the only state permits required for the proposed development. In addition, a Cascade County Floodplain Permit would also be required.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The Proposed Action would have no negative cumulative effects on the biological, physical, and human environments. When considered over the long-term, the Proposed Action positively impacts the public's recreational use of the Sun River, a popular recreational river in Montana.

The natural environment would continue to provide habitat to transient and permanent wildlife species and would be open to the public for stream access. The Proposed Action would not impact the local wildlife species that frequent the property. Though bald eagle, great blue heron, chestnut-collared longspur, and bobolink, Montana Species of Concern, have been observed in the vicinity of Medicine River FAS, the proposed project is unlikely to impact these species. There is no wolf pack located in the vicinity of the FAS, so it is unlikely that the Proposed Action would impact gray wolves.

Soils disturbed during construction could colonize with weeds. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native reclamation seed mix where necessary to reduce the establishment of weeds. FWP would continue implementing the Statewide Integrated Weed Management Plan using chemical, biological and mechanical methods to control weeds on the property.

The proposed developments of Medicine River FAS would enhance the recreational opportunities that exist at this site. The project design would address issues with parking, river access, and resource improvements.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the Medicine River FAS Proposed Development Project, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two public notices in *the Great Falls Tribune* and *the Helena Independent Record*.
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>.
- Draft EA's will be available at the FWP Region 4 Headquarters in Great Falls and the FWP State Headquarters in Helena.
- A news release will be prepared and distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Regions 4 issues.
- Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

If requested within the comment period, FWP will schedule and conduct a public meeting on this proposed action if deemed necessary.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for (30) thirty days. Written comments will be accepted until **5:00 p.m., date , 2014** and can be emailed to Vicki Robinson at vrobinson@mt.gov or mailed to the address below:

Medicine River Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this Proposed Action.

Based on an evaluation of impacts to the physical and human environment under MEPA, this environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action: therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur. FWP assessed the growth-inducing or

growth-inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value effected, any precedent that would be set as a result of an impact of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. As this EA revealed no significant impacts from the proposed actions, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Vicki Robinson

Region 4 Fishing Access Site Program Manager

4600 Giant Springs Road

Great Falls, MT 59405

vrobinson@mt.gov

(406) 454-5854

Andrea Darling

FWP EA Contractor

39 Big Dipper Drive

Montana City, MT 59634

apdarling@gmail.com

3. List of agencies or offices consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Design and Construction

Lands Unit

Legal Unit

Fisheries Division

Wildlife Division

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

APPENDICES

- A. MCA 23-1-110 Qualification Checklist
- B. Native Species Report - Montana Natural Heritage Program
- C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- D. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks- Best Management Practices
- E. State Historic Preservation Office Concurrence

APPENDIX A

23-1-110 MCA PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date: April 21, 2015

Person Reviewing: Andrea Darling

Project Location: Medicine River FAS is located along the Sun River in the town of Sun River, about 26 miles west of Great Falls, Montana on Highway 200 in Cascade County. The land is located in Section 34, Township 21 North, Range 1 West.

Description of Proposed Work In 1996, FWP acquired 11 acres of land in Cascade County, Montana along the Sun River for the purpose of establishing a FAS. FWP proposes to develop Medicine River FAS by constructing a gravel boat launch, extending the access road to the river, developing a new parking area and staging area, and installing barrier rock, fencing, and signs.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed action or improvement is of enough significance to fall under 23-1-110 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☒ **A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?**
Comments: The extension of the access road and new staging area would be built over undeveloped, though previously disturbed, land.
- ☐ **B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: No new construction.
- ☒ **C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: Yes, for the parking area, staging area, and extension of the access road.
- ☒ **D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: The new parking area would increase day use parking capacity and would be constructed over undeveloped, though previously disturbed, land.
- ☐ **E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a doublewide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: None.
- ☒ **F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: A new gravel boat launch would be constructed along the river shore.
- ☐ **G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: No.
- ☐ **H. Any new above ground utility lines?**
Comments: No.
- ☐ **I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?**
Comments: No campsites would be constructed.
- ☐ **J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern, including effects of a series of individual projects?**
Comments: The proposed action would improve parking facilities and vehicle use through the FAS.

APPENDIX B

NATIVE SPECIES REPORT

MONTANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Vicinity of Medicine River Fishing Access Site

Species of Concern Terms and Definitions

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (<http://nris.mt.gov>) indicates no occurrences of any animal or plant species listed as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) within the vicinity of the proposed project. The search found that bald eagle, delisted and being monitored by the USFWS, and classified as Sensitive by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management, was observed within one mile of the proposed project area as recently as 2011. The search by MNHP also indicated that other Montana Species of Concern have been observed in the vicinity of the proposed project, including great blue heron, chestnut-collared longspur, and bobolink.

Montana Species of Concern. The term “**Species of Concern**” includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (Nature Serve 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are “at-risk”. Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known “occurrences” or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species’ life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific Pollinator).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Endangered Species Act)- Terms and Definitions

LE. Listed endangered: Any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

LT. Listed threatened: Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

C. Candidate: Those taxa for which sufficient information on biological status and threats exists to propose to list them as threatened or endangered.

DM. Recovered, delisted, and being monitored - Any previously listed species that is now recovered, has been delisted, and is being monitored.

BGEPA. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA provides criminal and civil penalties for

persons who take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, at any time or any manner, any bald eagle ... [or any golden eagle], alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof.

MBTA. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements four treaties that provide for international protection of migratory birds. The statute's language is clear that actions resulting in a "taking" or possession (permanent or temporary) of a protected species are a violation of the MBTA.

BCC. Birds of Conservation Concern 2008. The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act

Status Ranks	
Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

MFWP Conservation Need. Under Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy of 2005, individual animal species are assigned levels of conservation need as follows:

- Tier I.** Greatest conservation need. Montana FWP has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities and focus areas.
- Tier II.** Moderate conservation need. Montana FWP could use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species communities and focus areas.
- Tier III.** Lower conservation need. Although important to Montana's wildlife diversity, these species, communities and focus areas are either abundant or widespread or are believed to have adequate conservation already in place.
- Tier IV.** Species that are non-native, incidental or on the periphery of their range and are either expanding or very common in adjacent states.

SENSITIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS IN THE VICINITY OF

MEDICINE RIVER FISHING ACCESS SITE

1. *Ardea herodias* (Great Blue Heron)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Natural Heritage Ranks

State: **S3**

Global: **G5**

Habitat: Riparian forest

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management:

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of great blue heron within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2011.

2. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Natural Heritage Ranks

State: **S4**

Global: **G5**

Habitat: Riparian forest

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **DM; BGEPA; MBTA; BCC**

U.S. Forest Service: **Sensitive**

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **1**

Element Occurrence data was reported of bald eagle within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 2009.

3. *Calcarius ornatus* (Chestnut-collared longspur)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Natural Heritage Ranks

State: **S2B**

Global: **G5**

Habitat: Grasslands

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of chestnut-collared longspur within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 1998.

4. *Calcarius ornatus* (Bobolink)

Vertebrate animal- Bird

Natural Heritage Ranks

State: **S3B**

Global: **G5**

Habitat: Moist Grasslands

Federal Agency Status:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

U.S. Forest Service:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Sensitive**

FWP CFWCS Tier: **3**

Element Occurrence data was reported of bobolink within one mile of the project area. Last recorded observation date was 1999.

APPENDIX C

TOURISM REPORT

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Carol Crockett, Grant Manager
Montana Office of Tourism -Department of Commerce
301 S. Park Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Project Name: Medicine River Fishing Access Site Proposed Development Project

Project Description: In 1996, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) acquired 11 acres of land in Cascade County, Montana along the Sun River for the purpose of establishing a fishing access site (FAS). FWP proposes to develop Medicine River FAS by constructing a gravel boat launch, extending the access road to the river, developing a new parking area and staging area, and installing barrier rock, fencing, and signs.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, this project has the potential to positively impact the tourism and recreation industry economy if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

2. Does this impending Development alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO YES If YES, briefly describe:

Yes, as described, the project has the potential to improve quality and quantity of tourism and recreational opportunities if properly maintained. We are assuming the agency has determined it has necessary funding for the on-going operations and maintenance once this project is complete.

Signature Carol Crockett, Grant Manager Date April 21, 2015

APPENDIX D
MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

10-02-02

Updated May 1, 2008

I. ROADS

A. Road Planning and location

1. Minimize the number of roads constructed at the FAS through comprehensive road planning, recognizing foreseeable future uses.
 - a. Use existing roads, unless use of such roads would cause or aggravate an erosion problem.
2. Fit the road to the topography by locating roads on natural benches and following natural contours. Avoid long, steep road grades and narrow canyons.
3. Locate roads on stable geology, including well-drained soils and rock formations that tend to dip into the slope. Avoid slumps and slide-prone areas characterized by steep slopes, highly weathered bedrock, clay beds, concave slopes, hummocky topography, and rock layers that dip parallel to the slope. Avoid wet areas, including seeps, wetlands, wet meadows, and natural drainage channels.
4. Minimize the number of stream crossings.
 - a. Choose stable stream crossing sites. "Stable" refers to streambanks with erosion-resistant materials and in hydrologically safe spots.

B. Road Design

1. Design roads to the minimum standard necessary to accommodate anticipated use and equipment. The need for higher engineering standards can be alleviated through proper road-use management. "Standard" refers to road width.
2. Design roads to minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Vary road grades to reduce concentrated flow in road drainage ditches, culverts, and on fill slopes and road surfaces.

C. Drainage from Road Surface

1. Provide adequate drainage from the surface of all permanent and temporary roads. Use outsloped, insloped or crowned roads, installing proper drainage features. Space road drainage features so peak flow on road surface or in ditches will not exceed their capacity.
 - a. Outsloped roads provide means of dispersing water in a low-energy flow from the road surface. Outsloped roads are appropriate when fill slopes are stable, drainage will not flow directly into stream channels, and transportation safety can be met.
 - b. For insloped roads, plan ditch gradients steep enough, generally greater than 2%, but less than 8%, to prevent sediment deposition and ditch erosion. The steeper gradients may be suitable for more stable soils; use the lower gradients for less stable soils.

- c. Design and install road surface drainage features at adequate spacing to control erosion; steeper gradients require more frequent drainage features. Properly constructed drain dips can be an economical method of road surface drainage. Construct drain dips deep enough into the sub-grade so that traffic will not obliterate them.
 2. For ditch relief/culverts, construct stable catch basins at stable angles. Protect the inflow end of cross-drain culverts from plugging and armor if in erodible soil. Skewing ditch relief culverts 20 to 30 degrees toward the inflow from the ditch will improve inlet efficiency.
 3. Provide energy dissipators (rock piles, slash, log chunks, etc.) where necessary to reduce erosion at outlet of drainage features. Cross-drains, culverts, water bars, dips, and other drainage structures should not discharge onto erodible soils or fill slopes without outfall protection.
 4. Route road drainage through adequate filtration zones, or other sediment-settling structures. Install road drainage features above stream crossings to route discharge into filtration zones before entering a stream.
- D. Construction/Reconstruction
1. Stabilize erodible, exposed soils by seeding, compacting, riprapping, benching, mulching, or other suitable means.
 2. At the toe of potentially erodible fill slopes, particularly near stream channels, pile slash in a row parallel to the road to trap sediment. When done concurrently with road construction, this is one method to effectively control sediment movement and it also provides an economical way of disposing of roadway slash. Limit the height, width and length of these "slash filter windrows" so not to impede wildlife movement. Sediment fabric fences or other methods may be used if effective.
 3. Construct cut and fill slopes at stable angles to prevent sloughing and subsequent erosion.
 4. Avoid incorporating potentially unstable woody debris in the fill portion of the road prism. Where possible, leave existing rooted trees or shrubs at the toe of the fill slope to stabilize the fill.
 5. Place debris, overburden, and other waste materials associated with construction and maintenance activities in a location to avoid entry into streams. Include these waste areas in soil stabilization planning for the road.
 6. When using existing roads, reconstruct only to the extent necessary to provide adequate drainage and safety; avoid disturbing stable road surfaces. Consider abandoning existing roads when their use would aggravate erosion.
- E. Road Maintenance
1. Grade road surfaces only as often as necessary to maintain a stable running surface and to retain the original surface drainage.
 2. Maintain erosion control features through periodic inspection and maintenance, including cleaning dips and cross-drains, repairing ditches, marking culvert inlets to aid in location, and clearing debris from culverts.
 3. Avoid cutting the toe of cut slopes when grading roads, pulling ditches, or

plowing snow.

4. Avoid using roads during wet periods if such use would likely damage the road drainage features. Consider gates, barricades or signs to limit use of roads during wet periods.

II. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES (parking areas, campsites, trails, ramps, restrooms)

A. Site Design

1. Design a site that best fits the topography, soil type, and stream character, while minimizing soil disturbance and economically accomplishing recreational objectives. Keep roads and parking lots at least 50 feet from water; if closer, mitigate with vegetative buffers as necessary.
2. Locate foot trails to avoid concentrating runoff and provide breaks in grade as needed. Locate trails and parking areas away from natural drainage systems and divert runoff to stable areas. Limit the grade of trails on unstable, saturated, highly erosive, or easily compacted soils
3. Scale the number of boat ramps, campsites, parking areas, bathroom facilities, etc. to be commensurate with existing and anticipated needs. Facilities should not invite such use that natural features will be degraded.
4. Provide adequate barriers to minimize off-road vehicle use

B. Maintenance: Soil Disturbance and Drainage

1. Maintenance operations minimize soil disturbance around parking lots, swimming areas and campsites, through proper placement and dispersal of such facilities or by reseeding disturbed ground. Drainage from such facilities should be promoted through proper grading.
2. Maintain adequate drainage for ramps by keeping side drains functional or by maintaining drainage of road surface above ramps or by crowning (on natural surfaces).
3. Maintain adequate drainage for trails. Use mitigating measures, such as water bars, wood chips, and grass seeding, to reduce erosion on trails.
4. When roads are abandoned during reconstruction or to implement site-control, they must be reseeded and provided with adequate drainage so that periodic maintenance is not required.

III. RAMPS AND STREAM CROSSINGS

A. Legal Requirements

1. Relevant permits must be obtained prior to building bridges across streams or boat ramps. Such permits include the SPA 124 permit, the COE 404 permit, and the DNRC Floodplain Development Permit.

B. Design Considerations

1. Placement of boat ramp should be such that boats can load and unload with out difficulty and the notch in the bank where the ramp was placed does not encourage bank erosion. Extensions of boat ramps beyond the natural bank can also encourage erosion.

2. Adjust the road grade or provide drainage features (e.g. rubber flaps) to reduce the concentration of road drainage to stream crossings and boat ramps. Direct drainage flow through an adequate filtration zone and away from the ramp or crossing through the use of gravel side-drains, crowning (on natural surfaces) or 30-degree angled grooves on concrete ramps.
3. Avoid unimproved stream crossings on permanent streams. On ephemeral streams, when a culvert or bridge is not feasible, locate drive-throughs on a stable, rocky portion of the stream channel.
4. Unimproved (non-concrete) ramps should only be used when the native soils are sufficiently gravelly or rocky to withstand the use at the site and to resist erosion.

C. Installation of Stream Crossings and Ramps

1. Minimize stream channel disturbances and related sediment problems during construction of road and installation of stream crossing structures. Do not place erodible material into stream channels. Remove stockpiled material from high water zones. Locate temporary construction bypass roads in locations where the stream course will have a minimal disturbance. Time the construction activities to protect fisheries and water quality.
2. Where ramps enter the stream channel, they should follow the natural streambed in order to avoid changing stream hydraulics and to optimize use of boat trailers.
3. Use culverts with a minimum diameter of 15 inches for permanent stream crossings and cross drains. Proper sizing of culverts may dictate a larger pipe and should be based on a 50-year flow recurrence interval. Install culverts to conform to the natural streambed and slope on all perennial streams and on intermittent streams that support fish or that provide seasonal fish passage. Place culverts slightly below normal stream grade to avoid culvert outfall barriers. Do not alter stream channels upstream from culverts, unless necessary to protect fill or to prevent culvert blockage. Armor the inlet and/or outlet with rock or other suitable material where needed.
4. Prevent erosion of boat ramps and the affected streambank through proper placement (so as to not catch the stream current) and hardening (riprap or erosion resistant woody vegetation).
5. Maintain a 1-foot minimum cover for culverts 18-36 inches in diameter, and a cover of one-third diameter for larger culverts to prevent crushing by traffic.

APPENDIX E

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE CONCURRENCE

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FEB 26 2014

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

February 25, 2014

Mr. Bardell Mangum, Landscape Architect
Design & Construction Bureau
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
1522 9th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-0701

RE: FWP FY 2013-2014 Fishing Access Site Capital Improvement Projects

Dear Mr. Mangum:

Thank you for the letter (received January 31, 2014) regarding the Fiscal Year 2013 – 2014 Fishing Access Site Capital Improvement Projects. Based on the receive documentation, we feel the following actions will require additional consultation:

FWP File #505.5	Kelly Island FAS	T13N R20W S26	Missoula County
FWP File #274B.1	Darby Bridge FAS	T3N R21W S14	Ravalli County
FWP File #677.1	Paradise FAS	T5S R9E S8	Park County
FWP File #307.2	Emigrant FAS	T5S R8E S27	Park County
FWP File #25A.1	Aspen Trails FAS	T10N R3W S9	Lewis & Clark County
FWP File #184.1	Carroll Trail FAS	T15N R18E S9	Fergus County
FWP File #685.2	Pelican FAS	T1S R16E S8	Sweet Grass County
FWP File #231.2	Cliff Swallow FAS	T4S R17E S4	Stillwater County
FWP File #865.1	South Sandstone FAS	T7N R58E S29	Fallon County

We concur that the following actions have a low likelihood of an adverse effect to heritage resources:

FWP File #857.1	Somers FAS	T27N R21W S26	Flathead County
FWP File #915.2	Teakettle FAS	T30N R20W S16	Flathead County
FWP File # 521B.1	Kookoosint FAS	T18N R24W S6	Sanders County
FWP File #599B.1	McWeneger Slough FAS	T28N R21W S1	Flathead County
FWP File #60.1	Bell Crossing FAS	T8N R20W S17	Ravalli County
FWP File #535.1	Loch Leven FAS	T5S R9E S28	Park County
FWP File #430.1	Harrison Lake FAS	T1S R1W S34; T2W R1W S3	Madison County
FWP File #601.2	Medicine River FAS	T21N R1W S34	Cascade County
FWP File #995.1	Whitebird FAS	T3S R19E S14	Stillwater County
FWP File #121.1	Bratten FAS	T1S R17E S23	Sweet Grass County
FWP File #1002.2	Whitetail Reservoir FAS	T36N R50E S10	Daniels County
FWP File #318.1	Faber Reservoir FAS	T29N R20E S21	Blaine County

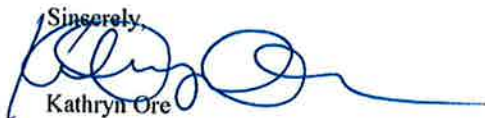
Please note that our concurrence does not substitute for a good faith effort to consult with interested parties, local government authorities, and American Indian Tribes. If you receive a comment that substantially relates to a heritage property located within or adjacent to one of the above actions, please forward it to our office for review. Include documentation of how the comment was addressed.

File: FWP/Fish – 2014 – 2014013120

245 North Roberts Street
P.O. Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201
(406) 444-2694
(406) 444-2696 FAX
montanahistoricalsociety.org

If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me at (406) 444-0388 or kore@mt.gov.
Thank you for consulting with us.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Ore
Review and Compliance Officer
Montana State Historic Preservation Office